

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9891

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 6988

E O 11652 GDS

TAGS PFOR

SUBJ: THIRD COUNTRY ISSUES

FOR ASSTSECY WILLIAM ROGERS FROM AMB

1. RE SPECIFIC ITEMS LISTED REFTEL: #

A. DISMANTLING OAS SANCTIONS: COLOMBIA FAVORS AND EXPECTS IT; FAILURE TO LIFT SANCTIONS WOULD BE VIEWED AS EVIDENCE OF OAS INEFFECTIVENESS AND THE HOPELESSNESS OF COUNTING ON THE SYSTEM. THE GOC EXPECTS US TO SUPPORT THIS MOVE. US ABSTENTION OR PASSIVITY AT THIS LATE DATE WOULD BE RESENTED AND WOULD RESULT IN A LOSS OF RESPECT AND CONFIDENCE IN US BY THE GOC AND MORE DIFFUSELY BY THE NATION AT LARGE. LIEVANO'S VIEWS WHICH YOU KNOW WELL GENERALLY

REFLECT SENTIMENT IN THE INFORMED PUBLIC.

B. RECIPROCAL US-CUBAN MOVES: COLOMBIA WOULD WELCOME THEM AND BELIEVES THEY SHOULD OCCUR. IF THEY DO NOT, IT WOULD NOT BE SERIOUS, SINCE COLOMBIANS KNOW WE HAVE SOME DIFFICULT PROBLEMS IN NORMALIZING RELATIONS. THEY DO BELIEVE WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY HERE FOR IMA-

INATIVE LEADERSHIPHOWEVER. THEREFORE IF NOTHING HAPPENS COLOMBIANS WILL SEE IT AS A LOST OPPORTUNIITY AND IT WILL ADD TO GENERAL DOUBTS ABOUT OUR POLIT COURAGE AND LEADERSHIP.

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C. CANAL TREATY: THIS IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE IN COLOMBIA. ALL PERSUASIONS BELIEVE A NEW TREATY IS ESSENTIAL AND SYMPATHY FOR PANAMANIAN ASPIRATIONS IS OVERWHELMING. TO MOST INFORMED COLOMBIANS THIS IS VIEWED AS ESSENTIAL TO ANY RE-ENERGIZING OF THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM. INDEED, MOST COLOMBIANS THINK THE CANAL ISSUE HAS SYMBOLIC HEMISPHERE DIMENSIONS THAT IN EFFECT MAKE IT A US-LA ISSUE. TO COLOMBIANS THIS IS THE MODERN VERSION OF ABROGATING THE PLATT AMENDMENT. THE GOC IS PLEASED WITH THE US ADMIN'S POSITION AND WITH OUR COMMITMENT TO NEGOTIATE A SATISFACTORY TREATY. THEY EXPECT US TO PRESS FORWARD.

D. BREAKDOWN IN NEGOTIATIONS: I CONSIDER THIS POSSIBILITY THE MOST OMINOUS POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TO HAVE FACED US IN THIS HEMISPHERE IN A LONG TIME. AS IMPLIED IN THE FOREGOING PARA, COLOMBIANS--JUSTLY OR UNJUSTLY--FEEL THAT IT IS THE US THAT HAS TO GO THE LAST MILE. AS A CONSEQUENCE, AND GIVEN THE COMPLICATED SUBTLE SUBJECT MATTER, THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE THAT COLOMBIANS WOULD EVER BE MADE TO BELIEVE WE WERE NOT RESPONSIBLE WHOLLY OR IN PART FOR ANY BREAKDOWN. IT WOULD BE HARD TO CONVINCE THE MORE SOPHISTICATED POWER ELITE; IT WILL BE NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE TO PERSUADE THE MASS OF THE PUBLIC WHO ARE FAR MORE EMOTIONAL ON THE ISSUE. IN SHORT, THE LIKELIHOOD IS OVERWHELMING THAT A BREAKDOWN WILL BE VIEWED AS OUR FAULT, JUSTLY OR UNJUSTLY. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES A BREAKDOWN WOULD DESTROY COLOMBIAN FAITH IN OUR CREDIBILITY AND CONFIDENCE IN OUR LEADERSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP. FOR MANY COLOMBIANS THE RESULT WOULD BE POSITIVE ANTAGONISM, AND IN GENERAL THE WIDE FRIENDLY FEELING TOWARDS THE US WHICH CURRENTLY EXISTS WOULD BE MASSIVELY ERODED. I HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT A BREAKDOWN WOULD COME CLOSE TO DESTROYING THE BASIS FOR A FRUITFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH COLOMBIA AND THE REST OF LA FOR MANY YEARS TO COME. WERE VIOLENT INCIDENTS TO OCCUR IN PANAMA OR THE ZONE, THE SITUATION WOULD BE THAT MUCH WORSE. THE DEPTH OF COLOMBIAN FEELING ON THIS ISSUE AND THEREFORE OF ITS PROBABLE ADVERSE REACTION, IS HARD TO EXAGGERATE.

E. FAILURE TO GET OPEC EXCLUSION: ALTHOUGH COLOMBIA ITSELF IS NOT AFFECTED, COLOMBIANS WIDELY VIEW THIS POINT AS A TEST CASE OF US INTENTIONS AND ATTITUDES ON TRADE POLICIES. FAILURE THEREFORE WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE REACTION, UNDERMINING CONFIDENCE IN OUR INTENTIONS AND CAPACITY TO HELP. MANY COLOMBIANS WOULD SIMPLY

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GIVE UP ON US (SEE 3 BELOW).

2. TWO OTHER GENERAL POINTS SHOULD BE NOTED: FIRST, IN TERMS OF THE COMPLEX OF ECONOMIC ISSUES THAT ARE NORMALLY THOUGHT OF AS THIRD WORLD PROBLEMS, THE COLOMBIAN ATTITUDE IS VERY RATIONAL AND ITS APPROACH CONGENIAL TO OUR OWN VIEWS AND INTERESTS. MOST COLOMBIANS DO NOT LIKE TO THINK OF THEMSELVES AS PART OF THE THIRD WORLD; THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT AFRO-ASIAN COUNTRIES

HAVE THEIR INTERESTS AT HEART; AND THEY RESENT AND FEAR THINGS LIKE THE LOME ACCORD. THE GOC DOES NOT RPT CET FAVOR THE BLOC APPROACH AND SHARES OUR VIEWS THERE. BUT COLOMBIANS INSIST THAT THE BLOC MENTALITY IS A DEFENSIVE REACTION TO VACUUMS LEFT BY WITHDRAWAL OF US POWER AND TO LACK OF US LEADERSHIP AND INITIATIVES IN THIS AREA. THEY FEAR THEY THEMSELVES MAY BE FORCED INTO IT. THUS THEY VERY MUCH DESIRE AND HOPE FOR US INITIATIVES, INCLUDING UNILATERAL ONES, TO DEMONSTRATE WE MEAN WHAT WE SAY.

3. THIS IN TURN LEADS TO A SECOND DIMENSION. COLOMBIANS OF MOST PERSUASIONS OUTSIDE THE EXTREMES DEPLORE WHAT THEY SEE AS DIMINISHED US "PRESENCE" IN THE HEMISPHERE, I.E., US LEADERSHIP. COLOMBIA WOULD LIKE TO SEE A STRONGLY INVOLVED US, THOUGH ON TERMS OF EQUALITY AND NON PATERNALISM. INSISTENTLY THEY URGE THAT WE DRAMATIZE OUR POWER AND CONSTRUCTIVE INVOLVEMENT WITH SOME KIND OF BOLD LEADERSHIP LIKE THE MARINE-WITHDRAWING, PLATT AMENDMENT-ABROGATING STEPS THAT UNDERPINNED FDR'S GOOD NEIGHBOR POLICY. BUT AS IT STANDS THERE IS A GROWING DOUBT ABOUT THE SINCERITY OF OUR INTEREST, OUR WILLINGNESS TO BE HELPFUL AND OUR CAPACITY TO BE WORLD LEADERS. THIS RESULTS IN A CUMULATIVE DOUBT THAT WE CAN BE COUNTED ON TO HELP. IN MANY PLACES IN LA, THEY HAVE ALREADY GIVEN UP ON US; IN COLOMBIA THERE IS STILL HOPE AND FAITH THAT WE CAN PROVIDE THE LEADERSHIP FOR A MUTUALLY CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP. BUT IT WILL NOT PERSIST INDEFINITELY WITHOUT SOME EVIDENCE TO SUSTAIN IT. SO THE DANGER IS THAT COLOMBIA TOO WILL SOONER OR LATER GIVE UP ON US IF WE DO NOT REVERSE THE TREND. I REFER TO BOGOTA 2128 OF MAR5, 1975 "THE US AND COLOMBIA: THE PROBLEM OF LINKAGES" WHICH DEVELOPS THIS POINT MORE FULLY AND WHOSE ANALYSIS IS I BELIEVE STILL CORRECT. VAKY

NOTE BY OC/T: #REFTEL OMISSION AS RECEIVED

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